2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
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of the parties objects to the decision of the *Mkovo*. It is the queen's pre- 692
rogative to settle disputes between royal relatives, but she also privately 693
settles differences which, for reasons of public policy or of the prestige of the parties, should not be publicly discussed, and sometimes, to avoid the hardening of transient differences into permanent hostility, even withdraws cases, especially witchcraft cases, from the jurisdiction of the *Mkovo*. The queen has an unshakable reputation for integrity, and acts independently, if she likes, though often she consults trusted advisers, some of whom at present are not her councillors.

The role of the queen is not unconnected with the institution of 693
'mothers' of districts. 'Mothers' are appointed by the queen or with her approval, and are usually her relatives, living at the capital and having direct access to her. Generally they report in the first instance to the councillors, especially to the son of the queen's mother's brother, who is the greatest councillor. The office of 'mothers', though hereditary, often changes hands because of its responsibilities and inadequate rewards, the opportunities of favourably placed persons and the requirement of residence at or near the capital. Often a widow, familiar with her husband's arrangements, takes over the position, enlisting the help of a relative, who at her death naturally steps into her shoes. Since the fees received cannot meet the needs of taxpayers, usually only old people are 'mothers', but inability to cope with long journeys forces them to entrust some of their work to available sons or relatives, who in turn may succeed to the position. 'Mothers' are often related to, but may be only fortuitously linked with, the heads of districts under their charge. A foreign chief or headman may be introduced at the capital by a friend or relative or stranger, who thereupon becomes his 'mother'. In 1912, when a [67]
colony of settlers from Basutoland came, Masheoli, who had no previous association with them, took the message of their arrival to the queen and henceforth acted as their 'mother'. Independent foreign chiefs also have their 'mothers', who sometimes live far from the capital.

'Mothers' have politico-legal and other functions. They receive their 'children', the district heads or foreign chiefs, and act as intermediaries whenever formal relations with the queen or great councillors are involved. When it is impracticable for a district head to bring beer to the queen, he may send mealies, which are deposited at the 'mother's' and there converted into the tributary beer. The arrival of beer from a district is always reported to the 'mother', who receives one calabash. 'Mothers' are the messengers or ambassadors of the queen sent to settle disputes among their 'children' or to represent her, for instance, at the formal installation of a district head. Important links in politics, they are the master links in the legal system. Some 'mothers' supervise the legal interrelations of many districts with the capital. As some districts are far off, eight to ten miles, they may delegate the work, in respect of some districts or of some of its aspects, to others, such as sons, wives, sister's sons, or wife's brothers. Thus Khidima, 'mother' of Maoulana, Mazaga, Madumani, Gabiezi, Musugududzi, and a European-owned farm, sometimes puts cases coming from the first three districts in the hands of his sister's son, but, since Khidima's own son has reached years